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THE DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY¹

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In the United States, the department of the navy is the constituted organ of the government for administering the navy. Its sole reason for existence is the possibility of war. The most important office in the navy department, after that of the secretary of the navy, is the office of naval operations. All the other offices in the navy are merely accessory to that one particular office the function of which is the preparation of the navy for war.

The method of naval administration now in force in the United States is the outcome of a gradual development. When the Constitution went into effect in 1789, it contained several references to the navy. Congress was given power to "provide and maintain a navy." The President was made the "commander-in-chief of the navy" and there was a clause which forbade the States from owning ships of war in time of peace. When, during Washington's administration, the executive departments were organized, there was no navy, and there was no pressing need for one. Congress, therefore, vested the control of the navy in the secretary of war. The frigate *Constitution* and her sister ships were thus built under the direction of the war department. But the imminent hostilities with France in 1798 revealed the need of a separate executive department for the proper administration of our sea force, and, on April 30, 1798, the bill creating the navy department became a law.

The rich experience gained in the war of 1812 exposed the fatuity of having the navy administered by a civilian, unaided by responsible professional advisers, or even the means of carry-

¹ A paper read at the meeting of the American Political Science Association at Cincinnati, Ohio, December 29, 1916.

ing on the duties of his office. The act of February 7, 1815, was therefore passed, which created the board of navy commissioners, consisting of three post captains, the highest rank of that day. This board was attached to the secretary's office to discharge under his superintendence all the ministerial duties of the office. This new legislation was a step in the right direction. It was modeled upon the excellent naval administrations created for the British navy in 1688. Unfortunately, our legislators took only part of the system to which they had turned for enlightenment. They provided an executive and military branch "for the employment of vessels of war," but they left out the civil and industrial branch which has to do with the construction, armament, and equipment of the war vessels, and the "procurement of naval stores and materials." Herein lay the weakness of the act of 1815. Its purpose besides was misunderstood from the first, and by no less a person than the secretary of the navy, whose hands it was intended to strengthen. The latter insisted that the duties of the commissioners were of a civil character, and this false conception of the object of the navy board gave rise to much friction, until in the end it led to the repeal of the law.

A remedy for the defects was sought in the act of August 31, 1842, which, in place of the navy board, substituted five naval administrative bureaus, whose names were: bureau of yards and docks; bureau of construction, equipment and repair; bureau of provisions and clothing; bureau of ordnance and hydrography; bureau of medicine and surgery. Subsequently three additional bureaus of navigation, steam engineering and equipment were established.

The missing left arm of the naval organization was thus supplied; but, in the same stroke of the pen, the all important right arm was severed, and the navy was left without a responsible direction of its military force. In addition there was that pernicious clause which provided that the "orders of a chief of bureau shall be considered as emanating from the secretary of the navy, and shall have full force and effect as such." The act thus unintentionally created, in practice, no less than half

a dozen secretaries of the navy, each one, in his own bureau, clothed with executive authority equal to that of the constitutional commander-in-chief. This was a flagrant violation of a fundamental military principle, and it is this that caused such dire confusion, extravagance, duplication of work and irresponsibility, which, according to several secretaries of the navy, have characterized the business methods of the navy department for the last sixty years. Moreover, each chief of bureau was so engaged with the affairs of his own bureau that the general management of the navy and its employment was left to a civilian totally unfamiliar with naval affairs.

During the first few months of the civil war the defects of the administrative system of the navy department attracted widespread attention. The weakness of the secretary's office as a directing and unifying force was remedied in part by the creation of the office of assistant secretary of the navy. This was a step in the right direction toward correlating the work of the several bureaus. But even then further agencies were necessary to assist the secretary in his administration of what Lincoln called "Uncle Sam's web-feet." These Secretary Welles sought in the "commission of conference," created to discuss and determine the necessary naval plans and operation, and in a second confidential board comprising the bureau chiefs for the purpose of "considering and acting upon such subjects connected with the naval service as may be submitted to them by the department." In 1863 a "permanent commission" was appointed to report on all questions relating to science upon which professional advice was needed. During the war various other temporary boards, such as the "ironclad board," the "harbor commission," and the "board on plans and designs for the new vessels," were also created as circumstances demanded.

"The very great success of the navy in the War of Secession," commented Admiral Mahan in one of his graphic studies of our naval administration, "is universally admitted and needs no insistence; but, though frequently narrated historically, it is doubtful whether it is yet philosophically appreciated, or even understood. For present purposes it is sufficient to note

the fact that there was then found within the navy department—nothing existing there before, but introduced fortuitously for the occasion—a means by which the enthusiastic determination of the nation could take shape in intelligent comprehension of the issues and in strongly coördinate effort; while to the satisfactory maintenance of the activity thus directed the bureau system was found adequate.”

The war showed the merits of the bureau system under favorable forcing conditions. But peace speedily demonstrated its defects. The moment hostilities came to a close, the principal task of the navy department became the reduction of the huge establishment which had been developed during the war. The commission of conference and the other boards were discontinued. Captain Gustavus V. Fox, who, as assistant secretary of the navy, had supplied the place of the “one navy commissioner,” which had been urgently recommended when the navy department was reorganized in 1842, resigned, and with him disappeared what had been virtually an institution, rather than an individual or an office. Later on, the law authorizing an assistant secretary of the navy was repealed. “The lesson of the civil war was thrown away,” remarked one naval authority, “and the department relapsed into a state looking to the early advent of the millenium, when wars on earth shall cease.”

From this dream of uninterrupted peace the country was awakened in 1873, when the imminence of war with Spain, incident upon the seizure of the *Virginius*, spurred the department to the consideration of military questions. That part of the “business” had been unfortunately neglected in our naval administration since 1866. But nothing resulted from the war scare and another lesson was lost upon us.

It cannot be said that there was any concealment of this inability of the navy department of itself to deal with questions of war. In 1877 an attempt was made by Secretary Thompson to unify the separate parts of the navy department by forming a board consisting of the chiefs of the several bureaus, but the new organization effected little, for the centrifugal forces of the department were too much for it. This was only one

of the several attempts made during the period 1866-1881 to create some permanent board which should occupy a position in the administrative hierarchy between the chiefs of bureaus and the secretary of the navy, and thus bring to an end a condition that was becoming intolerable. Secretary William C. Whitney, in his annual report of 1885, frankly admitted the "universal dissatisfaction" with the inner workings of the navy department: "It is expressed to me quite universally by the naval officers, coupled with the hope and expectation that some remedy may be found and speedily applied. The country has expended since July 1, 1868, over seventy-five millions of money on the construction, repair, equipment, and ordnance of vessels, which sum, with a very slight exception, has been substantially thrown away." "It is questionable," he went on to add, "whether we have a single naval vessel finished and afloat at the present time that could be trusted to encounter the ships of any important power. This is no secret; the fact has been repeatedly commented upon in congress, confessed by our highest naval authorities, and deprecated by all. It is idle to suppose that abuses of the character I have glanced at can be prevented merely by a change in the personnel of the department. It is the system which is vicious." And he cites the case of the *Omaha*, upon which four separate bureaus had been working, independently and not always in harmony, in producing their respective parts of the completed ship, with the result that when she was ready for sea, they had so completely appropriated her space that they had left barely coal room for four days' steaming.

Such a pitiless disclosure of "mismanagement, of wasteful expenditure, of injudicious and ill-advised disposition of public moneys," should have lead to immediate and salutary reforms. Secretary Whitney admitted that the evils could not be corrected under the organization of the department then existing. Yet nothing came of it; and four years later we read Secretary Tracy voicing a similar complaint that the entire organization of the department was "without system or coherence."

When the war with Spain broke out, the navy department, for the fourth time, found itself with no organization for the

strategic control of its fleets, the bureaus being fully engrossed with their own administrative work. Accordingly, the so-called naval strategy board was extemporized to study the strategic situation and to offer sound military advice upon current affairs to the secretary of the navy and to the President as constitutional commander-in-chief. Fortunately, the strategy board had at its command a plan for action which the naval war college had thoroughly digested a few years before. This, the only one to which careful thought had been given, was perforce the one which Admiral Sampson's fleet and General Shafter's army followed.

After the war, the strategy board, being merely a temporary organization, lapsed, and the navy department once more refused to admit that it had duties other than administrative. But this condition could not continue long. In 1900 Captain Henry C. Taylor's views on the "concrete" needs of the navy department resulted in the formation of a general board for the purpose of dealing with the military duties of the department. "The American navy," he wrote, "has for some years felt instinctively that this, or something like this, was needed for future efficiency. Evidence of this is apparent in the creation, many years ago, of a war college at Newport and an office of intelligence in the navy department. In those two institutions are to be found many of the elements of a general staff, requiring only a slight drawing together by a common head to create a nucleus of effort around which would form a body of great usefulness to the navy and to the country." The members of the general board were the admiral of the navy, the chief of the bureau of navigation, the chief intelligence officer, and the president of the naval war college. Its duties were to ascertain the demands which our national policies were likely to make on the navy, and to advise the secretaries of the measures and the plans necessary to accomplish the navy's mission. This involved the preparation of the necessary plans for war, and the coördinating for this end of the work of the naval war college, which did the strategic and tactical thinking for the navy, and the office of naval intelligence, which gathered the data for studies of the mobilization plans of other nations.

The jealousies and fears of the administrative bureaus for a time seriously threatened the existence of the general board. But the prestige which the newly formed body owed to its president, the admiral of the navy, enabled it to hold its own and to improve its early position as the military branch of the navy department. Its rôle, however, was merely that of an advisory body to the secretary of the navy, to whom it addressed all its communications. In addition, it is well to bear in mind that the general board was established only by a general order (No. 544, dated March 13, 1900) issued by the navy department, and that it never received legislative recognition by congress until 1916.

On the whole the organization of the navy department remained based upon its former plan. The several bureaus continued to exercise the same duties as heretofore, with one exception. This concerned the bureau of navigation, whose principal functions were the administration and direction of the personnel, which was also an administrative bureau of the department. Congress having failed to provide a department with "command duties," there grew up the custom of entrusting the military duties of the navy department to this bureau, "in addition to its other duties." By law, the bureau of navigation had no precedence over the other bureaus, yet it acquired a priority in rank by reason of its directive duties. But the material bureaus that supply the requirements of the military branch did not always feel obliged to conform to the standards set by the bureau of navigation, and the bureau, on the other hand, was so deeply involved in its own routine of personnel administration that it sometimes could not fully appreciate its "additional duties" of preparing the navy for war.

In his annual report for 1900, Secretary John D. Long offered a plan for the simplification of the department's organization. This referred to the consolidation of the material bureaus of construction and repair, steam engineering and equipment. "The union of these three bureaus, the chief function of which is to deal with the material of the ship, into one bureau, the consolidation of their several corps of assistants and inspectors,

and the conduct of the really integral work of building and equipping vessels under the management of one responsible chief instead of three chiefs, would promote the efficient and economical administration of this important part of the business of the navy department." Nothing could be done without the coöperation of congress, however, and as that body took no action upon this recommendation, the opportunity of securing harmony by consolidation was passed over.

In the meantime Admiral Taylor, as chief of the bureau of navigation, was continuing his efforts to secure "an efficient administration of the fleet." In his annual report for 1902, he dwelt at length upon this all-important subject. The efforts made by the navy since 1893 to bring about a "larger control and a closer responsibility," had been attended with partial success. The bureau of navigation, the general board, the office of naval intelligence, the war college, and the board of inspection and survey had been drawn steadily closer together as component parts of a general staff. All this had been accomplished without legislative assistance; but "we can go no further," he remarked, "without congressional legislation, which shall establish a general staff with the control necessary to administer more effectively the affairs of the fleet. A complete plan is prepared, which will require only legislative recognition of the existence of a chief of a general staff and the several sections necessary to carry out the various details. Without such an organization, the power to establish thorough reforms will be lacking."

This and subsequent recommendations failed to bring about the desired action by congress. In 1909 the President appointed a board to consider the principles which should form the foundation for the reorganization of the department. The members of this board were ex-Secretaries William H. Moody and Paul Morton, rear admirals Stephen B. Luce and Alfred T. Mahan, and Congressman A. G. Dayton. Their report was so plain and so eloquent an appeal for reform that the very soundness of its recommendations should have convinced the stubborn legislators at the Capitol. But this, unfortunately, was not the case.

Congress refused to heed even the best professional advice, and did nothing.

One of the first acts of Secretary Meyer, after he came to the navy department in 1909, was to appoint the Swift board to consider the means of properly coördinating the work of the interdependent bureaus. "Advice on all subjects may be had for the asking, or even without asking," wrote Mr. Meyer in his annual report for 1909, "but as a rule, it would not be advice that it would be wise to follow. Its authors are not responsible." The secretary of the navy was, as should be under our form of government, a civilian, but, being a civilian, he lacked expert knowledge adequately to direct all the varied operations of the navy. It was essential, then, that he should be provided with assistants in the different lines of duties. As any administrative legislation by congress seemed improbable, the Swift board recommended measures which could be put into effect by the secretary alone. The business administration of the navy department logically divided itself into groups under personnel, material, and the operations or management of the fleet. Personnel included the bureaus of navigation, medicine and surgery, and the marine corps. Material covered the bureaus of construction and repair, ordnance, equipment, steam engineering, and supplies and accounts. Public works were the province of the bureau of yards and docks. To each of these divisions was detailed an officer of rank on the active list whose duty it was to advise the secretary on the matters pertaining to his particular division, but who actually had no "supervisory or executive power or authority." Paragraph 109 of the *Navy Regulations* for 1913 read, "To assist the secretary of the navy in coördinating and carrying on the work of the four divisions, there shall be on duty in the office of the secretary four officers of the navy on the active list, not below the grade of captain, to be known, respectively, as the aid for operations, aid for personnel, aid for material, and aid for inspections. The four aids shall constitute the secretary's advisory council, which shall meet daily to consider important questions arising in any division affecting the general policies of the department with a

view to an effective coördination of the work of the four divisions." The aid for operations was to advise the secretary as to strategic and tactical matters in conjunction with the general board, and also advise regarding the movements and dispositions of naval vessels; the aid for personnel was to advise the secretary on matters which fell under the bureau of navigation, the bureau of medicine and surgery, the office of the judge-advocate-general, and the naval examining and retiring boards; the aid for material was to advise the secretary generally on matters concerning the construction, arming, equipment, and supply of naval vessels, and the management of the navy yards; the aid for inspections was to advise on all inspections ashore and afloat coming under the board of inspection and survey for ships, the board of inspection for shore stations, and the special inspecting officers. "It must be distinctly understood," wrote Mr. Meyer, "that the purposes contemplated for the aids cannot be effected without an entirely broad view, each of his own field of activity, and without any participation in the details of the bureaus. The aids will not be allowed to burden themselves with the details, and will thus be free to discuss policies and reforms with the secretary." This was as it should be, and in accordance with the suggestions made by Admiral Mahan in 1903, when he emphasized the "two points: (1) that the advisers, one or a board, should be wholly clear of administrative activity; and (2) that he or they be advisers only, pure and simple, with no power to affect the individual responsibility of the decision. This must be preserved, under whatever method, as the secretary's privilege as well as his obligation."

In practice, Secretary Meyer's plan of naval reorganization was an improvement over the conditions existing when he came to the department. It placed the military branch in partial direction of the military direction of the navy, and brought about an improvement of the departmental routine, due to the advice of the aids, which was "exceedingly gratifying." The one imperfection of the plan was that it had not the force of law. Under any new secretary that organization might lapse back to the basis of the statute where the civil branch was given full

power to work without consulting the military branch, which, after all, was alone ultimately responsible for the successful prosecution of naval campaigns.

This was what actually happened when Secretary Daniels succeeded Mr. Meyer in the navy department. One aid after another disappeared from the secretary's council. The only addition was an aid for education, created to further the secretary's ambition to familiarize each gun-pointer and coal-passer with the mysteries of the English language and the problems of elementary mathematics.

Then came the outbreak of the European war, with naval operations on a scale unheard of in the world's history. Before the superb organization of the British navy, which at the outset checked the activities of the high sea fleet of Germany, the American people stood aghast. If there is one thing the Americans have prided themselves upon it is their common sense, their practical appreciation of the adaptation of means to ends. To the administration of their navy, one would have thought that they would apply some of the principles of efficiency which they had used in their mastery of the ancient frontier and of the wilderness and the western deserts. Yet, to the surprise of thoughtful citizens, their sea power, the all important factor of their national defence, they permitted to develop along the most "haphazard lines." The lessons of the immediate present were too serious to be entirely neglected. In fact so serious was the warning to us that naval officers felt emboldened to speak their minds more freely than was their wont, and the naval committees of congress in their hearing learned truths which, under ordinary circumstances, they would have preferred to silence. The people at last became aroused. Patriotic societies everywhere lent their aid to organizing public opinion which, for once, was beginning to urge what it should have demanded of its representatives in congress years before. This time congress was willing to listen. By the first week in January, 1915, the subcommittee of the house committee on naval affairs reached a decision to recommend constructive legislation of far-reaching importance to the United States navy. This was the establish-

ment of an office of naval operations whose sole duty was to be the preparation of the fleet for war.

As finally approved, the act of March 3, 1915 left much to be desired. It was, however, a step in the right direction, and the newly appointed chief of naval operations proceeded at once to place the navy on a practical war basis. Without additional legislation, the office took steps towards organizing the industrial resources of the country behind the navy. In less than ten months definite plans for the mobilization of the entire naval force of the United States were approved and placed into operation so as to bring into active coöperation all the various bureaus and elements of the navy department, together with the part each naval station was to play in case of war. All the vessels of the merchant marine were inspected and their particular duties in case of war assigned. An immense amount of detail was worked out and was placed on file ready for immediate reference. A definite division of mining and mine sweeping was put into operation, the naval districts and the part they were to play were definitely organized, the radio service was completely systematized. All these duties essential to the proper preparation of the fleet for war were attended to by the new office, which the administrative bureaus heretofore had been unable and incapable of transacting.

Whatever shortcomings there were in the law were rectified in the naval appropriation bill approved on August 29, 1916. The chief of naval operations was promoted to the rank of admiral; to assist him in his duties were no less than fifteen officers of and above the rank of lieutenant-commander of the navy or major of the marine corps. He was "charged with the operations of the fleet, and with the preparation and readiness of plans for its use in war," and during the temporary absence of the secretary and assistant secretary of the navy he was to be next in succession to act as secretary of the navy. The chief of operations now became by law, as well as in name, the responsible and coördinating factor in the affairs of the department.

After this somewhat detailed résumé of the development and historical antecedents of the navy department, we are prepared to deal with the present.

The naval administration has at its head the secretary of the navy, a civilian, who is the personal representative of the President. His is the sole control and the single responsibility. He has subordinates, but no associates. The duty of decision is, therefore, his alone.

The details of the administrative machinery of the navy are as we have seen of two principal kinds: those that concern the operations of the fleets, in peace and in war, which is the military side of the naval administration; and those that relate to the creation and perservation of the material in its several varieties—ships, guns, engines, etc.—which is the civil side. The aggregation of duties under these two heads being too great for any one man to discharge, they have been again subdivided by law. For this purpose there exist side by side the two phases of the system, the military and the civil, the secretary being at the head of each, as the agent of the President.

To assist the secretary in the field of civil administration, there is an assistant secretary of the navy (act of July 11, 1890), who, in the temporary absence of the secretary, is next in succession to act as such.

The direction of activities in themselves essentially military—originally delegated to the board of navy commissioners, but vested from 1842 to 1915 in the secretary of the navy—is entrusted to the chief of naval operations who has the rank of admiral, and, under the direction of the secretary of the navy, is “charged with the operations of the fleet and with the preparation and readiness of plans for its use in war.” In the temporary absence of the secretary and assistant secretary of the navy, he is the next in succession to act as secretary of the navy, but the orders issued by him have at all times full force and effect as emanating from the secretary.

In practice, the scope of the duties embraced by the office of the chief of naval operations includes the direction of all strategic and tactical matters, organization, maneuvers, target practice, drills and exercises and the training of the fleet for war. This includes also the naval war college at Newport, the office of naval intelligence, the office of target practice and engineering

competitions, the operation of the radio service and other systems of communication, the operations of the aeronautics service, the division of mines and mining, the naval defence districts, the naval militia, and the coast guard when operating with the navy.

Next after the chief of operations come the seven bureaus² of the navy department, whose duties are limited in application to activities subordinate to military operations, and therefore essentially civil in character. They are, by title, as follows: Yards and docks, navigation, ordnance, construction and repair, steam engineering, supplies and accounts, and medicine and surgery. The several navy yards, and the designing, building and maintenance of their dry docks, wharfs and building, are in charge of the bureau of yards and docks, the chief of which is a civil engineer. The bureau of navigation has, "by a historical devolution," as Admiral Mahan pertinently remarked, "of which its name gives no suggestion, inherited the charge of the personnel of the navy, as well officers as enlisted men." It regulates their admission, supervises their training, preserves records of their service, and distributes them among the vessels of the fleet. In addition it is charged with the upkeep and operation of the Naval Academy and of the naval war college. Ordnance is a word which speaks for itself; this includes the manufacture of guns, torpedoes, mines and ammunition, as well as the maintenance of the naval gun factory, the naval proving ground and powder factory and of the various powder depots and magazines in the seaboard states. The bureau of construction and repair, whose personnel consists of naval architects, is charged with all that relates to the building and maintenance in repair of the hull part of the ships of the navy. Steam engineering includes the designing, building, maintenance and repair of machinery for all our vessels. The bureau of supplies and accounts is the purchasing agency of the service. It buys for other bureaus, subject to their requisition and inspection, and buys and supplies, on its own account, the provisions, clothing and supplies required for the

² The bureau of equipment was abolished by the act of June 30, 1914, and its duties distributed among the other bureaus.

ships in commission. It keeps, also, the pay accounts of the officers and men, and pays them at stated times. The hygiene of the navy is in charge of the bureau of medicine and surgery, the importance of which may be gauged by considering how far a well man is more useful than an invalid.

In addition to the bureaus, the organization of the navy department includes the judge advocate general of the navy, whose office considers and reports upon all legal questions relating to the personnel, and the solicitor, who attends to the other questions of law, such as the drafting and interpretation of statutes, and the drawing up of contracts.

The general nature of the functions of each bureau is apparent. To particularize further would be to become involved in a mass of technical details. The important fact to note is that each bureau has a distinct and mutually independent duty.

There is little question that the department administration would be greatly benefited by the creation of an office of inspections, which, constituted independently of the bureaus, would supervise the work done by the bureaus and make reports on the same directly to the secretary. In this way there would be provided a check upon the work of the several branches of the civil administration such as exists in every modern business for the purpose of obtaining greater efficiency in methods.

Before the establishment of the office of naval operations, the coördination and reconciliation of the divergent opinions inevitable between so many parties depended solely upon the secretary's appreciation of the necessities of the navy—not only from the point of view of the bureaus, but also from that of the fleet. It is true that, in matters of policy, the secretary, since 1900, has had the deliberations and reports of the general board to guide him, but that body being purely advisory, its recommendations have on many occasions been disregarded by him.

According to the navy regulations the various chiefs of bureaus, and the assistant secretary of the navy, the chief of naval operations, the major general commandant of the marine corps and the judge advocate general of the navy, form the secretary of the navy's advisory council. Meetings are held every week

at which the discussion relates to the various important matters of detail. Provision is also made for conferences between the chief of naval operations and the various bureaus when necessary to facilitate the transaction of business.

As at present developed there is every reason to believe that the organization of the navy department has reached the point where it may attain and preserve substantial unity of executive action, while at the same time it provides for the distribution among several individuals of a mass of detailed duties beyond the power of one man to discharge.

Admiral Mahan defined the test of a system of naval administration as "its capacity—inherent, not spasmodic—to keep the establishment of the navy abreast of the best professional opinion concerning contemporary necessities, both in quality and quantity. It needs not only to know and to have what is best today, but to embody an organic provision for watching and forecasting to a reasonable future what will be demanded. This may not be trusted to voluntary action or to individual initiative. There is needed a constituted organ to receive, digest, and then officially to state, in virtue of its recognized office, what the highest instructed professional opinion of the sea officers holds concerning the needs of the navy at the moment and for the future as far as present progress indicates." For forty years, the misconception and jealousy of our politicians prevented the navy from gaining the organization which it knew it must have if the fleet was to be effective in war. In the upbuilding of the new navy, the public mind also was centered too much on the power of the single ship; it took no account of the various accessories essential to the maintenance of the fleet. The greatest war of all time, however, has taught us that the administration of a navy consists not merely in building ships, in buying material, in repairing vessels, in enlisting men, in manning ships, or in developing navy yards and naval stations; it is the coördination of all these duties and their welding into an effective instrument of war. The responsibility for the efficiency of that instrument of war cannot therefore be divided. Each separate activity must be thoroughly controlled and made to coöperate toward the ultimate object of developing

the battle of efficiency of the fleet. The acts of March 3, 1915, and August 29, 1916, which established the office of naval operations, have paved the way for such a coördination in the department through the creation of a constituted military organ, senior to the existing administrative civil bureaus, and responsible for the preparation of the navy for war. The military branch of the department has been brought to the fore. But the prerogatives of the chiefs of the several civil bureaus granted by the act of August 31, 1842, unfortunately still prevail. While the office of naval operations has been installed in its proper place in the department, the bureaus have not yet received proper attention from our legislators. In time a more effective coördination may be brought about between these conflicting elements, but it will entail much effort and the waiving by the bureaus of some of their cherished but injudicious executive powers.

The spirit of our government requires that a civilian shall be at the head of the navy department. That is as it should be. But in this very lack of permanent tenure by the secretary himself lies one of the weaknesses of our system. As Mr. Meyer wrote in 1909, "in the past seven years there have been six secretaries of the navy." How can a civilian, lacking expert knowledge, under those circumstances direct all the varied operations of the naval service? With unlimited time a secretary could acquire that personal knowledge of details and acquaintance with the characteristics of his subordinates which are essential to the successful administrator. No such incumbency is to be expected under our system of government. To supply the defect inherent in temporary tenure and periodical change, there has been created in our naval administration the office of naval operations which may obtain for the navy a "tradition of policy,"—"analogous in fact" to quote Admiral Mahan's words, "to the principles of a political party, which are continuous in tradition, though progressive in modification. These run side by side with the policy of particular administrations; not affecting their constituted powers, but guiding general lines of action by influence, the benefit of which, through the assurance of continuity, is universally admitted."